

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting a Report on Ratification of World Intellectual Property Organization Treaties *January 31, 2000*

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

As required by the second proviso of the resolution of advice and consent to ratification of the World Intellectual Property Organization Copyright Treaty and the World Intellectual Property Organization Performances and Phonograms Treaty, passed by the Senate on October 21, 1998, I transmit herewith the first report on the status of the ratification of those treaties and related matters.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Jesse Helms, chairman, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. This letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 1.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Congressional Leaders and an Exchange With Reporters *February 1, 2000*

The President. Let me say I am delighted to have the congressional leadership here today—a good day for them to come, because today all of us as Americans celebrate the month where we mark the longest economic expansion in the history of the United States. It's an expansion that was earned by the American people through hard work, high technology, open markets, fiscal discipline, and one that I think we can all be justifiably proud of, but we ought to be determined to continue to deepen, to improve.

I also am looking forward to working in what will be a fast-paced congressional year, because of all the other things that are going on this year. But I think if we work together, we can get a lot done. And I am hoping that among other things, that the areas where there's already been some expressed interest in working together, like continuing to pay down the debt, working on bringing economic opportunities to our new markets, saving Social Security, that these things will see some real progress.

As all of you know, we have some unfinished business that I'd like to see dealt with. I hope we can allocate the interest savings from debt reduction to lengthen the life of Social Security. I hope we can reach agreement on a Medicare reform package which includes prescription drugs but also some reforms. I hope we can

pass a Patients' Bill of Rights and see some action on the gun legislation and the minimum wage and a few other things.

But I think we can really get some things done. And I just want to say to all of you, I am committed to working with you in looking for positive avenues to cooperate, and I think we'll find some.

Mr. Speaker.

Q. Mr. President—

Speaker J. Dennis Hastert. Oh, I think there's—

The President. We'll let them speak, and then we'll take your questions.

[*At this point, Speaker of the House J. Dennis Hastert, Senator Trent Lott, Senator Thomas A. Daschle, and Representative Richard A. Gephardt made brief remarks.*]

The President. Thank you.

Gun Safety Legislation

Q. Mr. President, no one mentioned gun control—30,000 people are killed every year by guns—

The President. I think I did mention that.

Q. —and even the safety locks on children. What is this, that you can't get this through?

The President. Well, I'm not sure we can't. It passed the Senate, and we've got it in the

House, and I hope we can pass it. You can ask the House leaders more about that. But I intend—I think I mentioned it. If I didn't, I certainly meant to mention it in my opening remarks. And I intend to work hard to try to pass it.

Senator Lott. The juvenile justice bill is actually in conference between the House and Senate. And some of those provisions will at least be a part of the consideration of that legislation.

Q. Are you predicting it will pass?

Senator Lott. Oh, no, I'm not predicting. I'm stating—

Q. Why not? [Laughter]

Senator Lott. Because it hasn't been completed yet. But it is in conference, and the conferees will be working on it.

Alaska Airlines Flight 261

Q. Do you have any comment on the Alaska Airlines crash in California?

The President. Well, it's a terrible, tragic thing, of course. But you know, we have a real—well-established procedure here for how these tragedies are handled, through the established authorities. And I think before I make any substantive comment, we have to let them do their job.

But it was a very sad thing. And I, like most Americans, I suppose, I was watching it on television, and the helicopters were out there soon after the tragedy occurred. It's a very sad thing.

Northern Ireland Peace Process

Q. Mr. President, you talked to Tony Blair about the difficulties in carrying out the Good Friday accord. Could you describe what you two said and what you think the U.S. can do?

And secondly, what has India done to convince you to travel there, despite its lack of progress on nuclear proliferation?

The President. Well, let me answer the first question. I spoke to Tony Blair; I spoke to Gerry Adams. We've been in constant contact with the Irish and the British Governments, and I had a good meeting with David Trimble a few days ago.

The thing is at such a point now that I think that any public comments I make on the merits at this moment might do more harm than good. We are heavily involved in trying to get the Good Friday accords implemented and get the present process supported. It's working great; these joint institutions are working well. New

investment is going into Northern Ireland. The people have voted for a peace process that united people with differences, believe it or not, more profound than the ones that are represented around this table. And it's working. And it would be a tragedy if it were derailed. But in order to keep it going, everybody's going to have to honor the terms of the agreement. And so we're working on that now, and I think that's all I should say now.

India-U.S. Relations

Q. And on India?

The President. I'm going because it's the biggest democracy in the world, and I think we haven't been working with them enough. Just as I believe we have to engage China that has a political system very different from ours, we have to engage India that makes decisions sometimes we don't agree with, but is a great democracy that has preserved their democracy. I must say, against enormous odds. And we have an enormous common interest in shaping the future with them, and I'm looking forward to it.

I think it's unfortunate that the United States has been estranged, or if not estranged, at least it's had a distant relationship with the Indians for too long.

New Hampshire Primaries

Q. Who's going to win the primaries?

Q. What about the primary? What would you tell New Hampshire voters today?

Q. Any predictions?

The President. I don't need to tell them anything, because one of the things about New Hampshire voters is, they all make up their own mind after an exhaustive inquiry. If there's any place in the world where people are actually well prepared to make their own decisions, it's there.

It's a wonderful place, you know. Of course, I love it. They've been very good to me. But it's a great system. I know some people say, well, it's not totally representative of the rest of the country. But, you know, I think people running for office—the Speaker and I were talking about this at the beginning—people running for offices like ours that have millions and millions of constituents shouldn't be able to get there just over, with all respect, television and the mass media. They ought to have to go out and sit down with people in their homes, in their coffee shops, in their places of business,

and let them ask questions and talk to them and be sized up.

I think it is a great exercise. And I've enjoyed watching it unfold for the first time in three elections where I'm not involved. But it's really been quite wonderful.

Q. Who's going to win? [Laughter]

The President. They'll decide that tonight.

Q. Did you talk to the Vice President? Did you talk to the Vice President?

The President. I haven't talked to him in the last 48 hours. But I talk to him, you know, frequently. I haven't talked to him in the last 48 hours, but I've talked to others associated

with the campaign. They're all up there working hard. That's all you can do up there. Nobody knows how the people of New Hampshire are going to vote. You've just got to go up there and work your heart out and hope it comes out.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:44 a.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom; Sinn Féin leader Gerry Adams; and Ulster Unionist Party leader David Trimble. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Videotaped Address to the People of Puerto Rico on Efforts To Resolve the Impasse Over Armed Forces Training on Vieques Island

February 1, 2000

My fellow citizens, last April there was a tragic accident at the Navy range on Vieques. I deeply regret the loss to the family of David Sanes and the suffering of others injured on that day.

That accident focused attention on the long-standing concerns of the island about training operations there. It led to a strong view in the Commonwealth that the Navy should end its training on Vieques. I understand why many people feel that way.

At the same time, as Commander in Chief, I must do all I can to ensure that our service men and women get the very best training possible. I know you understand that. Many Puerto Ricans have served with real distinction in our Armed Forces. You have never turned your back on your duty to share in the defense of our country.

For more than 50 years, Vieques has been a central part of our training for the Atlantic Fleet. The reason this is such a difficult issue is because right now there are no alternative sites that provide the same combined training opportunities.

For the past 9 months, we've been working closely with Governor Rosselló and Resident Commissioner Romero-Barceló to find a solution that meets our training needs and addresses fairly the concerns of the people of Vieques. Today I'm announcing a course of action that will give

the people of Vieques themselves the right to determine the future of the island, while at the same time assuring that our training needs are met.

Between later this year and early 2002, the people of Vieques will vote. In that vote, the people of Vieques will be asked to choose between two alternatives. If they choose the first alternative, the Navy will cease all training on Vieques and leave the island by May 1, 2003. If they choose the other alternative, training will continue on Vieques on terms that will be presented in detail at least 3 months before the vote.

I believe this is the best way to resolve the impasse over Vieques because it gives the people most affected by this decision, the people who actually live on the island, the right to determine for themselves which course of action we should take. In the meantime, until that vote is held, we're taking several other steps to ensure that our service men and women get the training they need, while addressing the needs of Vieques.

First, during the period leading up to the vote, I am ordering the training done on Vieques will be limited to nonexplosive ordnance, meaning there will be no live fire. I am also directing the Navy and Marine Corps to cut in half the amount of time they will spend training. In 1998 our troops trained for